



Belltown Business Association

2608 Second Avenue,
PMB 290
Seattle, WA 98121-1212

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AWVSP Team Office

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May 25, 2004

Allison Ray
WSDOT Environmental Coordinator
AWV Project Office (Wells Fargo Building)
999 Third Avenue, Suite 2424
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Ray:

The Belltown Business Association represents businesses operating in the area of the City bounded by Denny Way, Sixth Avenue, Virginia Street and Alaskan Way along the Waterfront. As such, we have many members who will be directly or indirectly impacted by the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement project, some quite dramatically. We recognize that all of the alternatives will result in substantial and lengthy construction work in our neighborhood, but we also acknowledge the public necessity of this project. Therefore, in these comments we wish to highlight immediate concerns with the hope that close attention to these will be given by the project teams and that appropriate design efforts can be provided to addressing these "early on" in the process.

General Comment

Although there is considerable discussion about alternatives for the Viaduct and impacts in the immediate construction areas, there is very little information about impacts to much of the neighboring Belltown district, particularly in the traditional business district. It is not difficult for property owners and business interests here to visualize increases in general traffic, construction traffic, noise, and dust during the entire construction period; but no thorough analysis of this is presented. This lack of information contributes to uncertainty among business owners, particularly those who are considering establishing or renewing long-term leases.

Construction Alternatives

The construction of this project in all alternatives will be in itself a major impact to the Belltown community. There will be major disturbances and disruptions for all of us for many, many years. For many Belltown business owners and residents, this construction project will be a constant and immediate presence for a substantial percentage of their remaining lives. Yet, for nearly all alternatives there is only one proposed construction staging and scheduling approach portrayed, generally involving complex traffic ramping, routing, and construction of temporary viaduct

Our Mission: To create a vibrant and safe Belltown Community for business and residents.



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structures along the waterfront. Other construction staging and scheduling alternatives are not presented. For example, the project could demolish the entire viaduct at once and proceed ahead immediately and on all fronts with construction of the replacement. No information is provided about this alternative construction approach, and therefore, the community is not being given the opportunity to judge for itself whether it prefers an approach that may generate more intense impacts, but over a much shorter period and at arguably lower cost.

Temporary Traffic Routings

The construction period for all of the alternatives is very long, and the area of construction is relatively concentrated considering the length of time of the project. The Waterfront businesses (and particularly those located close to Broad) are going to be suffering with the temporary construction structures and traffic routings (plus all of the direct construction impacts such as noise and dust) for nearly a decade. For some of the alternatives, the ramps designed to temporarily route traffic at the bottom of Broad Street and over the railroad tracks will cause traffic to bypass the businesses located on or near Pier 70. For decades, Pier 70 has been a formidable challenge for commercial interests, but in recent years there have been noticeable improvements in the quality of tenants and operations in this facility. We want the engineering of the ramps and the by-passes to do the utmost to preserve accessibility and viability of the businesses in this area. For starters, it would seem that the Aerial Alternative, with its temporary viaduct structure planned from one end of the Waterfront to the other, does the least in addressing the needs of these waterfront businesses. Further attention to this issue of access needs to be given in the other alternatives as well.

Additionally, we strongly oppose a temporary option that would tunnel under Myrtle Edwards Park and the site for the future Olympic Sculpture Park in order to route traffic from Elliott to the Alaskan Way surface street. We have heard that this proposal may still be under consideration.

Viaduct Noise

The segment of SR99 between the south portal of the Battery Street Tunnel and the existing Viaduct is open to the air and generates considerable traffic noise affecting the hillside in Belltown and the Public Market. Is there any way that a lid or extension of the tunnel can be engineered into this project to eliminate this noise?

Traffic in Belltown

There is little or no information in the DEIS describing traffic volumes in Belltown both during construction and afterward, when the constructed alternative is put into operation. For the Surface Alternative (Page 124), it states that traffic on Downtown streets would increase by 16%



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(approximately 13,000 vehicles per day). We believe a sizeable share of this traffic would pass along Belltown Streets. We also believe that sizeable percentages of Downtown through-traffic will use Belltown Streets during construction of any of the alternatives, but there is no presentation or analysis of Belltown traffic in the DEIS. Ongoing traffic congestion will lessen the attraction of Belltown businesses to potential customers, and so we want evidence of a more thorough analysis of traffic planning for Belltown.

Construction Trucks and Equipment

Aside from the work that will be performed directly in Belltown (e.g., Battery Street Tunnel upgrades), there is no information about substantial flows of construction traffic through Belltown, other than Elliott and Western, which we must note are now virtually residential streets. In addition to Elliott and Western, we can visualize fairly constant use of the Downtown through-streets by heavy construction vehicles, delivery trucks, and equipment; but plans for staging and delivery of materials and equipment and for hauling and disposal of debris are not detailed in the DEIS. Therefore, it is difficult to determine how impacts of traffic congestion, dust, noise, and pavement wear-and-tear from construction traffic will occur and be minimized in the various sectors of our community.

Construction Noise

The Project is proposing a 24-hour, 7-day per week construction schedule and variances from the City's noise control ordinances. If this happens, will the greatest noise generators, e.g., pile drivers, be allowed to work at night? If this is the plan, then much more attention needs to be given to this plan as to how work can be scheduled and staged to minimize these situations.

Pedestrian Safety and Access

There is little discussion of pedestrian safety and pedestrian access in the DEIS, and this project provides an opportunity for significant improvements in an area that has some very serious pedestrian safety and access problems. Currently, the crossings of Western at Bell Street, Elliott at Battery, and Elliott at the on-ramp to the existing Viaduct are extremely dangerous. We request that the Project make the resolution of these pedestrian safety and access issues a high priority in the design for each of the alternatives. Additionally, we want to see how pedestrian traffic to the Waterfront will be maintained during construction, and a commitment to restoring pedestrian access to the Waterfront via Lander Street. It may be that with minimal additional expenditures, the Project can make a great public contribution toward pedestrian safety in these areas and solve some headaches that have been with us for years.



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Although the Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project will present unavoidable challenges to our community, we are hoping that all concerned will work together in a spirit of cooperation and trust, and the Belltown Business Association is committed to doing that. We look forward to continuing discussion on these and other issues as the day for commencement of the project work approaches. For future communications with our organization, you may contact the chair of our Transportation Committee, Greg Schuler, at 206-268-4013 (e-mail: gschuler@antiochsea.edu).

Sincerely,

Chuck Stempler
President
Belltown Business Association